

BIBLE TIMELINE ASSEMBLIES

53. THE STORY OF JONAH

Bible Base: Jonah

Key Christian Belief: God says 'Come back to me.'

Aim: To show that God is always ready to forgive us and wants us to forgive others too.

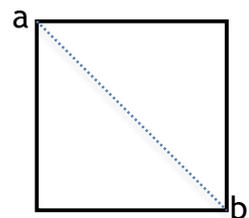
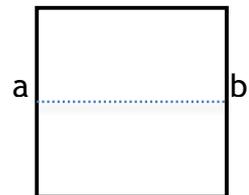
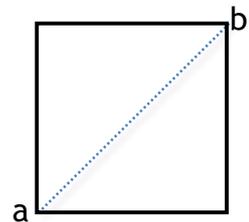
You will need the arrows visual attached. Print the arrows back to back on A4 card with the arrow on one side pointing up, the one on the other side pointing right. Then cut this into a square, 21cm x 21cm.

Using The Arrows Visual

This takes practice in front of a mirror.

As you begin the story, hold the visual up so that the audience sees an arrow pointing right. Then follow these instructions as indicated by the red numbers in the script.

1. Hold the card with your left hand at point a and your right hand at point b. Flip the card around this axis and the audience will see the arrow change from pointing right to pointing left and vice versa.
2. Hold the card in the middle at either side and flip the card around the horizontal axis and the audience will see the arrow change from pointing right to pointing down and vice versa.
3. Hold the card with your left hand at point a and your right hand at point b. Flip the card around this axis and the audience will either see the arrow change from pointing up to pointing down and vice versa or they will see an arrow that seems to point right on either side.



Introduction

Ask the children to think of times when they might say 'Serves you right!' to someone else. For example:

- Your brother is playing with his game boy in your bedroom after lights out. You tell him that he is not allowed to do this and that if your mother finds him, she will take the game boy from him. When this happens, and he doesn't get it back for a whole week, you might say 'Serves you right!'
- Someone in your class is found running in the corridor. Your teacher tells him that if she finds him running in the corridor again she will have to keep him in at break time. Next day he is found running in the corridor again and is kept in at break time. When he complains to you about it, you might say 'Serves you right!'

We often say this when someone deliberately does something they have been told not to do, even after they have been warned about what will happen if they do it. They do it anyway and when what they were told would happen happens, we say ‘Serves you right!’ They are getting what they deserve.

Today’s story is about one of God’s messengers who was sent with a message from God to people who were deliberately breaking God’s rules and doing what He had told them not to do. What did God have to say to them?

Bible Story

One day God said to Jonah: ‘Jonah, I want you to go to Nineveh’.

‘Nineveh?’ said Jonah. ‘I’m not going there! **1** The people there are nasty and mean. They are always arguing and fighting. They bully others. They tell lies and they cheat. I don’t want to go there!’

‘But Jonah,’ said God, **1** ‘I want you to go to Nineveh and tell the people there that if they do not change their ways they will be in big trouble.’

‘Serves them right!’ said Jonah and off he went in the opposite direction. **1**

He headed down to the harbour, found a boat that was going to Tarshish, paid the fare and got on board. The boat set sail from the harbour and out into the ocean. When they were far from land a fierce storm blew up. The wind blew hard, the sea got very rough and the sailors were frightened.

‘I think it might be my fault that we are in the middle of this storm,’ said Jonah. ‘Here I am on my way to Tarshish when I should be going to Nineveh. **1** If you want the storm to stop you will have to throw me overboard.’

The sailors did not want to do this - but eventually Jonah persuaded them and they threw him over the side.

‘Serves him right!’ they said as Jonah sank down into the sea. **2**

God looked down at Jonah, but He didn’t say ‘Serves you right!’ and leave him to drown. Instead, he sent a great big fish to swallow Jonah up. The fish swallowed Jonah down in one gulp and he ended up inside the fish’s tummy where it was all smelly and horrible.

Jonah looked up to God. **3** ‘Thank you for sending the fish to rescue me,’ he said.

God looked down at Jonah. **3** ‘Well, Jonah’ He said. ‘Are you ready to go to Nineveh?’

‘Yes I am,’ said Jonah. **3** ‘I’m sorry for disobeying you. I’m ready to do what you want.’

So God commanded the fish to spit Jonah out on a dry sandy beach. **3** Jonah cleaned himself up and set off for Nineveh. **2** Now at last Jonah was going God’s way. **3***

When Jonah got to the great city of Nineveh, he told the people there that they were in trouble. They knew that God wanted them to be kind to each other but instead they had chosen to argue and fight. **1** They knew that God wanted them to be truthful **1** but

instead they had chosen to cheat and to tell lies. **1** They knew that God wanted them to share what they had with others **1** but instead they had chosen to be selfish and mean. **1**

Jonah told them that God had been looking down at them **2** and was not pleased with what He had seen. If they did not change their ways they would be in big trouble.

‘What are we to do?’ asked the people of Nineveh.

‘Say sorry to God, **3** change your ways and He will forgive you’ replied Jonah.

So that is what the people did. They told God that they were sorry and were ready to change their ways. And when God looked down **3** and saw how sorry they were, He did as He had said. He forgave them and helped them to make a new start. **2** So now the people of Nineveh were going God’s way too! **3***

** Turn the card round several times at this point so that the arrow seems to continue pointing right no matter which way the card is turned.*

Exploring Christian Belief

In some ways we are all like Jonah and like the people of Nineveh. There are times when we know what God wants us to do and we don’t do it. We know what the right thing to do is but we deliberately do the opposite. We know it is wrong but we still do it anyway.

The people of Nineveh were treating each other very badly and God wanted them to know that He would not allow them to go on doing so forever. So He sent Jonah to warn them to change their ways. Unfortunately, Jonah didn’t like the people of Nineveh and thought they deserved to be punished. So he ran away in the opposite direction instead.

God was not pleased with Jonah but He did not treat him as he deserved. Instead, He was patient with him and, when he was ready to change his ways, He forgave him and gave him a second chance.

So Jonah went to Nineveh and told the people there what God had said. Fortunately, they listened to Jonah, said sorry to God and began to change their ways. Instead of arguing and fighting, cheating and telling lies and being selfish they began to treat each other with love and kindness and, as a result, I imagine Nineveh became a much happier place for everyone - which is just what God had wanted all along!

As with Jonah, God did not treat the people of Nineveh as they deserved. Instead, He was patient with them and when they were ready to change their ways, He forgave them and gave them a second chance.

When God looks down from heaven, He sees the wrong things that are in our world and in our lives and He wants us to know that He will not allow these things to continue forever. But for now He does not treat us as we deserve. Instead, He is patient with us and, if we tell Him that we are sorry and are ready to change our ways, He will always be ready to forgive us and to help us make a new start.

And He wants us to treat others like that too. If they say or do things that annoy us or hurt us He does not want us to treat them as we think they deserve but instead He wants us always to be ready to forgive them and to make friends with them again.

So if there are things in our lives that we know are not right let's learn to say sorry to God and ask Him to help us make a new start. If there are people who have hurt or annoyed us, let's learn to forgive them and to make friends with them again because we know that this is what God wants. And above all, let's learn to go God's way because, as Jonah and the people of Nineveh discovered, God's way is always the best way!

Prayer

Finish with a prayer thanking God that even though we often disobey Him, He is always ready to forgive us and to help us make a new start. Ask Him to help the children forgive those who have hurt them and make friends with them again when necessary too.